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Identical letters dated 22 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the thirtieth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/714).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the positions it has previously communicated in its identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council responding to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

The Syrian Government concludes that the present report, like its predecessors, falls fundamentally short of its presumed goal, which is the improvement of humanitarian conditions in Syria, and that the Secretariat is using it to mislead world opinion about the true reasons why humanitarian conditions are deteriorating for Syrians. In addition, the report is being used to level accusations and disparage the massive efforts being made by the Syrian Government aimed at combating terrorism in Syria, restoring security and stability to all Syrian cities and regions so that displaced persons and migrants can return to their homes and lives, and improving the humanitarian situation for Syrians in general.

In the present report, as in its predecessors, the Secretariat has displayed a suspicious congruence with the positions and policies of certain influential Security Council members that have adopted positions hostile to the Syrian Government throughout the events that Syria has been experiencing for years.

Since the Secretariat first began submitting its monthly reports to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, the Syrian Government has cooperated in earnest with the United Nations in supporting humanitarian work and consistently provided the Secretariat with reliable and detailed information. Regrettably, the Secretariat has insisted on ignoring that information and instead getting its information on the situation in Syria from sources that are misleading, politicized and biased against the Government, and some of which are directly linked to armed organizations and foreign intelligence services.

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The Syrian Government would like to offer the following specific examples from the report that illustrate the Secretariat's lack of professionalism and accuracy and show how it has embellished and distorted the facts.

1. The Syrian Government rejects the wilful disregard displayed by the report's authors for the Government's constitutional and legal right to defend its people against terrorism, particularly terrorism perpetrated by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front and the terrorist organizations associated with them, and its right to purge those armed terrorist groups from its territory, including from Aleppo, in accordance with international law. In Aleppo governorate, the Government is trying to break the siege and end years of humanitarian suffering owing to the fact that armed terrorist groups have spread in that governorate, used civilians as human shields and committed other horrifying terrorist crimes against civilians. The Syrian Government notes that the measures it has taken in Aleppo governorate are directed against terrorists, not "non-State armed groups", and have steered clear of targeting any civilian or service facility where civilians are present, in full compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. In conjunction with its allies, the Syrian Government has opened humanitarian corridors to help civilians who wish to leave neighbourhoods where terrorists are present and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to neighbourhoods in Aleppo. The Syrian Government regrets that Secretariat officials have not bothered to gather available information on the dozens of civilians who have been victims of terrorist sniper fire and gunfire while trying to use those crossings to move to safe neighbourhoods where there are no armed terrorist groups.

2. The Syrian Government is once again surprised that the Secretariat continues to depend on unreliable sources of information to form its biased positions against the Syrian Government. That information is intentionally misleading and designed to tarnish the image of the Syrian Government. In particular, the Secretariat insists on omitting mention of crimes committed by the terrorists, their sources of financing, and the persons facilitating their passage into Syrian territory. Perhaps the worst example is the Secretariat's reliance on information from speculative reports and data from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which serve as the basis for positions that lack any soundness or credibility. Organizations such as the Nur al-Din al-Zanki movement, the Nusrah Front, the Army of Conquest and Ahrar al-Sham are terrorist organizations and should not be absolved of responsibility for the deaths of dozens of civilian victims, including women and children.

The Syrian Government again rejects the Secretariat's ongoing attempts to burnish the image of the armed terrorist groups by calling them the "non-State armed opposition" (paragraphs 4, 5 and 16), and the Secretariat's failure to respond to our previous queries on the international legal basis for referring to organizations listed on the Security Council's lists of individuals, entities and groups linked to Al-Qaida, which is the backbone of the so-called Army of Conquest in Idlib and Aleppo, as the "non-State armed opposition". The Syrian Government also deplores the fact that in paragraph 35, for example, the Secretariat fails to name the terrorist organizations that recruit children and force them to marry.

3. The Syrian Government is surprised by the Secretariat's failure to characterize ISIL and the Nusrah Front as terrorist organizations, and the failure of

the Security Council, as yet, to characterize the Front for the Conquest of the Levant, which is heir to the Nusrah Front, as a terrorist organization.

4. The Syrian Government condemns the Secretariat's attempts, for example in paragraph 15, to whitewash and promote the operations carried out by the so-called international coalition led by the United States of America. It also condemns the report's wilful omission of any reference to the civilian casualties and massive destruction to infrastructure caused by the aerial bombardment, which the United States itself has acknowledged, while spouting lies about Syrian air force attacks that are genuinely directed at ISIL and Nusrah Front terrorists and groups linked to them and to Al-Qaida.

5. The Syrian Government is saddened by the report's selective approach, which is inconsistent with humanitarian principles. The report shines a spotlight on the suffering of Syrians in certain areas but not in others. It is clear that the Secretariat is not paying necessary heed to the deteriorating living conditions and health conditions of the people of Kafraya and Fu'ah, who have been facing starvation, thirst and a lack of medicine for months, not to mention daily indiscriminate shelling from the armed terrorist groups laying siege to those towns. The Secretariat also neglects to mention that those groups have prevented the United Nations humanitarian evaluation group from entering the towns for several months.

6. The Syrian Government strongly condemns the Secretariat's wilful and repeated disregard of the catastrophic humanitarian repercussions of the ongoing unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by the United States and the European Union on vital services sectors, such as health, education, energy, food, water and electricity, that provide for Syrians' daily needs and strengthen their resilience. As some Secretariat officials have acknowledged, those measures have had an adverse effect on the humanitarian work done by the Syrian Government and civil society associations, United Nations agencies, international organizations and foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria.

7. The Syrian Government reiterates its position that cross-border assistance is futile, and condemns once more the authors' insistence on covering up the fact that assistance continues regularly to fall into the hands of armed terrorist groups in the targeted areas. The notifications sent to the Syrian Government do not meet the minimum standard of credibility in terms of figures, information, numbers of beneficiaries and particulars on which parties collect and distribute the aid. The Syrian Government also rejects the Secretariat's attempts to inflate the number of aid beneficiaries into the millions in areas where the population, including children, is merely in the thousands, and reiterates that the United Nations monitoring mechanism cannot verify that cross-border assistance is reaching its rightful beneficiaries. We remind you that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are entry points for arms, materiel and ammunition being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Syrian Government has already confirmed that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is prepared to monitor the delivery of humanitarian assistance to beneficiaries, but the United Nations has failed to respond.

8. The Syrian Government reiterates that the authors of the report ignore the fact that successes achieved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance by United Nations agencies and international organizations to beneficiaries in both stable and unstable parts of Syria, most recently in July 2016, would not have been possible

without the assistance and facilities provided by the Syrian Government. In that regard, we note that the Syrian Government has informed the United Nations of its approval for the August 2016 plan to deliver humanitarian assistance to unstable areas, and that it has done everything that was asked of it in that regard.

9. The Syrian Government regrets that the Secretariat is not explicit about the responsibility of armed terrorist groups, which some have designated as "moderate", for the obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery to many of the areas where they are deployed or which they are besieging. For instance, those groups have cut off water, electricity and other essential services to Syrian civilians in Aleppo governorate. On 27 July 2016, those groups launched dozens of shells at the electrical transformer station in the Hamdaniyah neighbourhood, setting fire to the station and cutting off electricity to the city of Aleppo. The Secretariat also fails to mention the reason why the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been unable to deliver assistance to Palestinian refugees displaced from Yarmouk camp to Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham, which is that armed terrorist groups belonging to ISIL, Ahrar al-Sham and the Army of Islam issued a declaration stating that they are the only parties authorized to supervise aid distribution and receive assistance convoys entering Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham (paragraph 39). We also note that the Secretariat and its agents in Syria have failed to follow up on the bombing of electrical towers in the western part of Dar'a governorate, which cut off water to hundreds of thousands of people all over the governorate.

The report's authors also neglect to mention that one of the main reasons for shortages of electricity and drinking water among the besieged population of Aleppo is that "international coalition" aircraft bombed the Sulayman al-Halabi plant several months ago, putting it out of service. Those same aircraft and the armed terrorist groups have also bombed and destroyed water treatment facilities in Aleppo.

We also draw attention to the failure by the report's authors to mention that armed terrorist groups in the Wadi Barada region of Rif Dimashq blew up the Barada spring water pipeline that supplies the city of Damascus, causing leaks in that pipeline, which is one of the city of Damascus' main drinking water sources. We are obliged to ask: Does the Secretariat consider the actions of the armed terrorist groups to be correct behaviour not subject to debate?

10. The Syrian Government rejects the authors' reference to what they call a lack of agreement between the parties of the Four Towns ceasefire agreement covering Zabadani, Madaya, Fu'ah and Kafraya (paragraph 30). In actual fact, the handlers behind the terrorists who are besieging the towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya are the reason that no agreement has been reached. The Syrian Government has informed the office of the Resident Coordinator in writing that it has approved access to Zabadani and Madaya.

11. The Syrian Government once again condemns the Secretariat's continued bias in favour of the Turkish Government to the detriment of the hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hasakah governorate who have been affected by the closing of the Nusaybin border crossing. The Turkish Government has stubbornly refused to approve United Nations requests to bring humanitarian assistance into that governorate via that crossing. The Syrian Government reiterates that it is not true that the crossing has been closed temporarily since December 2015 — almost

eight months — owing to security reasons (paragraph 31). The closure is in fact due to political reasons that are well known, and is intended to increase the suffering of Syrian civilians under siege by both armed terrorist groups (notably ISIL) and the Turkish Government in those areas.

12. The Syrian Government wishes to clarify that as of 31 July 2016, the number of visa applications for United Nations staff approved during the month of July was 38, not 21, and 79 visas were renewed, not 23.

13. The Syrian Government would like to point out that the United Nations has been informed of the status of a number of its local staff members who have been arrested on charges of terrorism and collaboration with terrorists. They have been remanded to the competent courts. We find it odd that the United Nations should mention them as being detained. Why would the United Nations want to count among its staff members persons who are under investigation or implicated in terrorism?

14. The Syrian Government deplores the Secretariat's efforts to paint a negative picture of the work being done by foreign non-governmental organizations in Syria. In cooperation with national partners, the Syrian Government is providing those organizations with facilities and assistance to carry out their work as effectively as possible and in a way that responds to the needs of as many affected Syrians as possible. Syria once again points out to the Secretariat that, to date, the number of foreign non-governmental organizations authorized to deliver assistance in Syria is 22, not 17 as stated in the report. The Syrian Government also stresses that the true obstacles to the work of such organizations lies primarily in their limited funding and their inability to secure humanitarian needs and supplies because of the American and European unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed against Syria.

15. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership without foreign intervention and without preconditions. It further stresses that the political approach goes hand in hand with counter-terrorism efforts, which will continue until all of the armed terrorist groups active in Syria have been eradicated. In that connection, the Syrian Government stresses that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General needs to carry out his duties and reminds the Secretariat that the success of the political process and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism and on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people with no legal or moral basis.

16. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its call on the Security Council to prevail on those States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to refrain from doing so, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing of terrorism, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in Syria and delivering an unprecedented amount of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Syria.

I should be grateful if this letter and its annexes could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I to the identical letters dated 22 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Crimes and indiscriminate attacks committed by ISIL, the Nusrah Front, the Free Army, the Army of Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, the Army of Conquest and other armed terrorist groups ignored by the authors of the report

- During the current reporting period, terrorist attacks killed 160 civilians and injured dozens of others across the governorates of Syria, not including Raqqah and Idlib.
- On 24 July 2016, armed terrorist groups attacked residential neighbourhoods in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, including Bab Tuma, Mazzah, Arnus, the Harasta residential suburb, and Sa'sa', with dozens of mortar shells, killing 16 civilians, including women and children, and injuring dozens, some of them seriously. Extensive material damage was also caused.
- In the city of Aleppo, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield, located in the Bani Zayd, Rashidin, Bustan al-Qasr and Old Aleppo neighbourhoods, opened sniper fire and launched dozens of mortar shells, gas cylinder missiles and "hell cannon" missiles at the Nile Street, Ashrafiyah, Mogambo, Assad suburb of Hamdaniyah, Fayd, Aziziyah and Zahra' neighbourhoods, killing 74 civilians, including women and children, and injuring dozens of others. Material damage was caused to buildings, businesses, vehicles and infrastructure.
- Armed terrorist groups fired 10 mortar shells at the electrical transformer station at the 1070 housing project in the Hamdaniyah neighbourhood, starting a fire that cut off the city of Aleppo from electricity supplied by the Shaykh Hilal-Khanasir transmission line.
- A child was killed in Yabrud when a bomb left behind by armed terrorist groups exploded.
- Armed terrorist groups blew up the Barada spring water pipeline that supplies drinking water to the city of Damascus.
- Some 38 civilians were killed and 171 others were injured, most of them women and children, by two explosions. The first attack was carried out by a suicide bomber riding a bicycle. In the second attack, a truck carrying livestock and packed with explosives was detonated in the western quarter of the city of Qamishli.
- Armed terrorist groups in Dar'a fired three mortar shells at the Sahhari neighbourhood and the entrance to the police command and municipal building, killing three civilians and injuring three women with shrapnel. Extensive material damage was caused.

Annex II to the identical letters dated 22 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Examples of humanitarian assistance that was delivered during July 2016 thanks to the facilitation provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in addition to the assistance provided by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, with the full facilitation of the Syrian Government, delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid and medical assistance) provided from inside Syrian territory by United Nations agencies, to various governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Aleppo, Qunaytirah, Hasakah, Homs, Hama and Dar'a. Some 42,425 Syrian beneficiaries (143,705 families) received food parcels provided by the World Food Programme through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The total number of the beneficiaries of United Nations assistance distributed from inside Syrian territory thus stands at 3,639,588 (727,917 families).

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, with multifaceted support from the Syrian Government, delivered humanitarian aid provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from inside Syrian territory to most Syrian governorates. A total of some 298,100 food parcels were delivered to some 1,490,500 beneficiaries, in addition to tens of thousands of canned food parcels, other food items, and food aid for community kitchens, for hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries.

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, with the support of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid, medical assistance, water purifiers, wheelchairs and baby food) provided by United Nations agencies, ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and foreign non-governmental organizations in Syria to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries in Aleppo, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Suwayda', Tartus and Ladhiqiyah governorates.

- From 2014 through the end of May 2016, a total of 136,982 food parcels and 42,580 medical parcels have been delivered to the inhabitants of the camp by UNRWA. That is in addition to the continuing operation to provide non-food aid, other foodstuffs and medical care. We also note that the Palestine refugees in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham are inhabitants of Yarmouk camp who were displaced from the camp after the terrorist organization ISIL overran it in April 2015 in collusion with the terrorist Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups present inside the camp. UNRWA has ceased to provide its assistance to residents of the Yarmouk refugee camp through Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham, because the armed terrorist groups inside the camp issued a statement declaring themselves to be the only bodies authorized to oversee the distribution of assistance and to receive aid convoys entering Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham.